

EXHIBIT 11
DATE 3-19-07
SB 478

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to ask you to support SB 478, which would Implement a Statewide Suicide Prevention program.

I am a parent of two young adults who have suffered from mental illnesses and mentor two other young adults with mental illnesses. Both my son and one of the girls I mentor have had times of suicidal ideation and have done suicide gestures in my home. I have been fortunate in being able to access help for my kids, although we still struggle to obtain services for the girls I mentor. I am also a Lutheran pastor. Yesterday, a few moments before the 10:00 service, I received news that one of our members took his own life on Saturday. This congregation has had several members who completed suicide, and I continue to provide pastoral care to families impacted by those deaths. Needless to say, this is an issue which is near and dear to my heart.

Several communities have had coalitions, which have been addressing suicide prevention over the last several years. They tend to be our larger communities, which already have more resources than the rural parts of our state. This bill takes the next step in providing statewide leadership for our suicide prevention efforts, developing a comprehensive plan which will address the needs of rural as well as urban communities, providing culturally appropriate resources for our American Indian communities with opportunity for input from the public. It also strengthens efforts to provide suicide prevention hotline to all Montanans. This is a greatly needed "next step" which will strengthen our efforts to address this problem, and provide help and hope to many Montanans in need and their families.

Thank you very much for your support.

Rev. Melanie Martin-Dent
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